

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 10, 2010

0964

The Honorable Julius Genachowski  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

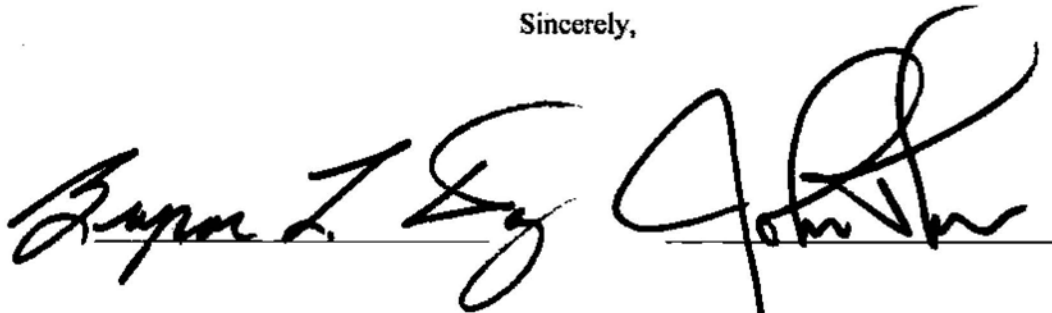
We write to share our thoughts on the National Broadband Plan (NBP). We applaud the goal that you have set for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to ensure that every American has affordable access to robust broadband service. We appreciate your focus on reform of the universal service fund and the need to explicitly support broadband as an important step in this process. As you craft the policies to achieve these goals, you must consider the impact of your proposals on rural America.

In the Recovery Act, Congress directed the FCC to conduct "an analysis of the most effective and efficient mechanisms for ensuring broadband access by *all people* of the United States." Consistent with the purposes laid out by Congress, the NBP contemplates the great social and economic benefits that broadband access brings – including increased educational and employment opportunity, improved health care, and greater energy efficiency. We know our shared goal is to ensure that every American, whether in Boston, Bismarck, Brattleboro or Barrow, can reap these benefits.

Our concern is that some of the proposals in the NBP have the potential to set the United States on a course toward a greater digital divide between urban and rural areas. For example, while trumpeting the benefits of broadband at 100 megabits per second (Mbps) for 100 million homes, the NBP also moves to transition the universal service fund to support broadband offerings at 4 Mbps. The practical impact is two very different goals for rural regions and more densely populated areas. Establishing such a low threshold for rural residents and businesses relegates them to second class broadband capacity. It hinders their ability to share in the transformative vision for broadband outlined in the NBP.

Rural Americans and businesses are understandably concerned about the impact of the proposals in the National Broadband Plan on their ability to receive comparable and affordable broadband service. We urge you to seriously consider these concerns as you implement the plan's recommendations and take the appropriate steps to ensure all Americans play a role in, and benefit from, the promise of broadband.

Sincerely,



Al Franken

Mark Udall

Herb Kohl

Amey Klobuchar

Kent Conrad

Shirley Fier

My Bance

Don H. Benson

Tom Harkin

Joe Test

Frank Lautenberg

Chuck Grassley

Jim Johnson

Rob Portman

Pat Leahy

John Barrasso

Mark Begich

Jeffrey A. Merkley

Jim Coon

Ron Wyden



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
United States Senate  
223 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

The 4 Mbps speed is very aggressive and represents one of the highest levels in the world today for universalization, while the NBP's 100 Mbps number is based on a long-range goal. Few residential customers today subscribe to 100 Mbps service, and 4 Mbps currently is the median speed purchased by consumers. Only 6 percent of consumers subscribe to broadband service that is faster than 10 Mbps. Broadband service at 4 Mbps permits consumers to utilize its full benefits, including web browsing, e-mail, two-way video conferencing, and watching educational lectures online in standard definition. The Target speed also is "reasonably comparable" to the broadband service currently provided in urban areas, which is the standard mandated under Section 254 of the Communications Act for universalization. Cost is also a factor that needs to be considered – subsidizing universal 100 Mbps deployment today could cost as much as \$320 billion, which could increase the size of the fund to \$40-50 billion annually, and lead to a universal service fee, on average, of \$30 per month per American household.

Be assured that I am committed to making broadband affordable and attainable by all Americans, regardless of where they live or which service providers they use. I look forward to working with you and other Members of Congress as the Commission transforms its universal service policies to ensure that there will be no digital divide in our nation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Julius Genachowski

Enclosure



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Russell D. Feingold  
United States Senate  
506 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Feingold:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Sincerely,



Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Al Franken  
United States Senate  
320 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Franken:

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Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senate  
135 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Grassley:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
United States Senate  
731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Harkin:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Sincerely,



Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable James M. Inhofe  
United States Senate  
453 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Inhofe:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Tim Johnson  
United States Senate  
136 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Johnson:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senate  
302 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Klobuchar:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Herbert Kohl  
United States Senate  
330 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Kohl:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy  
United States Senate  
433 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Leahy:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Sincerely,



Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Jeff Merkley  
United States Senate  
107 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Merkley:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Sincerely,

Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senate  
709 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Murkowski:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Julius Genachowski

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OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Pat Roberts  
United States Senate  
109 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Roberts:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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October 13, 2010

The Honorable Jon Tester  
United States Senate  
724 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Tester:

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Be assured that I am committed to making broadband affordable and attainable by all Americans, regardless of where they live or which service providers they use. I look forward to working with you and other Members of Congress as the Commission transforms its universal service policies to ensure that there will be no digital divide in our nation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Julius Genachowski

Enclosure



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable John R. Thune  
United States Senate  
493 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Thune:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Mark Udall  
United States Senate  
317 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Udall:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Max S. Baucus  
United States Senate  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Baucus:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Mark Begich  
United States Senate  
144 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Begich:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Robert F. Bennett  
United States Senate  
431 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bennett:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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Julius Genachowski

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Kent Conrad  
United States Senate  
530 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Conrad:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Byron L. Dorgan  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Dorgan:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

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OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable John Barrasso  
United States Senate  
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Barrasso:

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